

**In the Claims**

1. (currently amended) An endoscope insertion shaft comprising:  
a tubular member having an axis and including at least one aperture for increasing the flexibility thereof; and  
a sheath comprising at least the following layers:  
a braided layer;  
a laminating layer;  
a wear layer;  
wherein the braided layer jackets the tubular member; and  
a barrier layer comprising a polyester wrap disposed between the tubular member and the braided layer and jacketing the tubular member.
2. (original) The endoscope insertion shaft as set forth in Claim 1 wherein the at least one aperture comprises a pattern of apertures.
3. (original) The endoscope insertion shaft as set forth in Claim 2 wherein the pattern of apertures comprises a first set of apertures positioned along a line parallel to the axis of the tubular member.
4. (original) The endoscope insertion shaft as set forth in Claim 3 wherein the first set of apertures comprises at least one elongated aperture having an axis oriented at an angle to the axis of the tubular member.
5. (original) The endoscope insertion shaft as set forth in Claim 4 wherein the angle is in the range from zero to ninety degrees.
6. (original) The endoscope insertion shaft as set forth in Claim 2 wherein the pattern of apertures comprises a pair of apertures.

7. (original) The endoscope insertion shaft as set forth in Claim 2 wherein the apertures are circumferentially positioned on the tubular member.

8.-9. (cancelled)

10. (previously presented) The endoscope as set forth in Claim 1 wherein the laminating layer jackets the braided layer.

11. (original) The endoscope as set forth in Claim 10 wherein the wear layer jackets the laminating layer.

12. (original) The endoscope as set forth in Claim 1 wherein the sheath comprises a composite material.

13. (currently amended) An endoscope insertion shaft comprising:  
a tubular member having an axis and including at least one aperture for increasing the flexibility thereof;  
a barrier layer jacketing the tubular member;  
a braided layer jacketing the barrier layer;  
a laminating layer ~~jacketing the braided layer~~; and  
a wear layer ~~jacketing the laminating layer~~;  
wherein at least said barrier layer, said braided layer and said laminating layer are formed as a single composite structure.

14.-15. (cancelled)